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ChaosWord

Chris Pringle

This cryptic crossword was constructed from riddles found in Kralori fortune cookies or scribbled on walls in Dykene.

Across

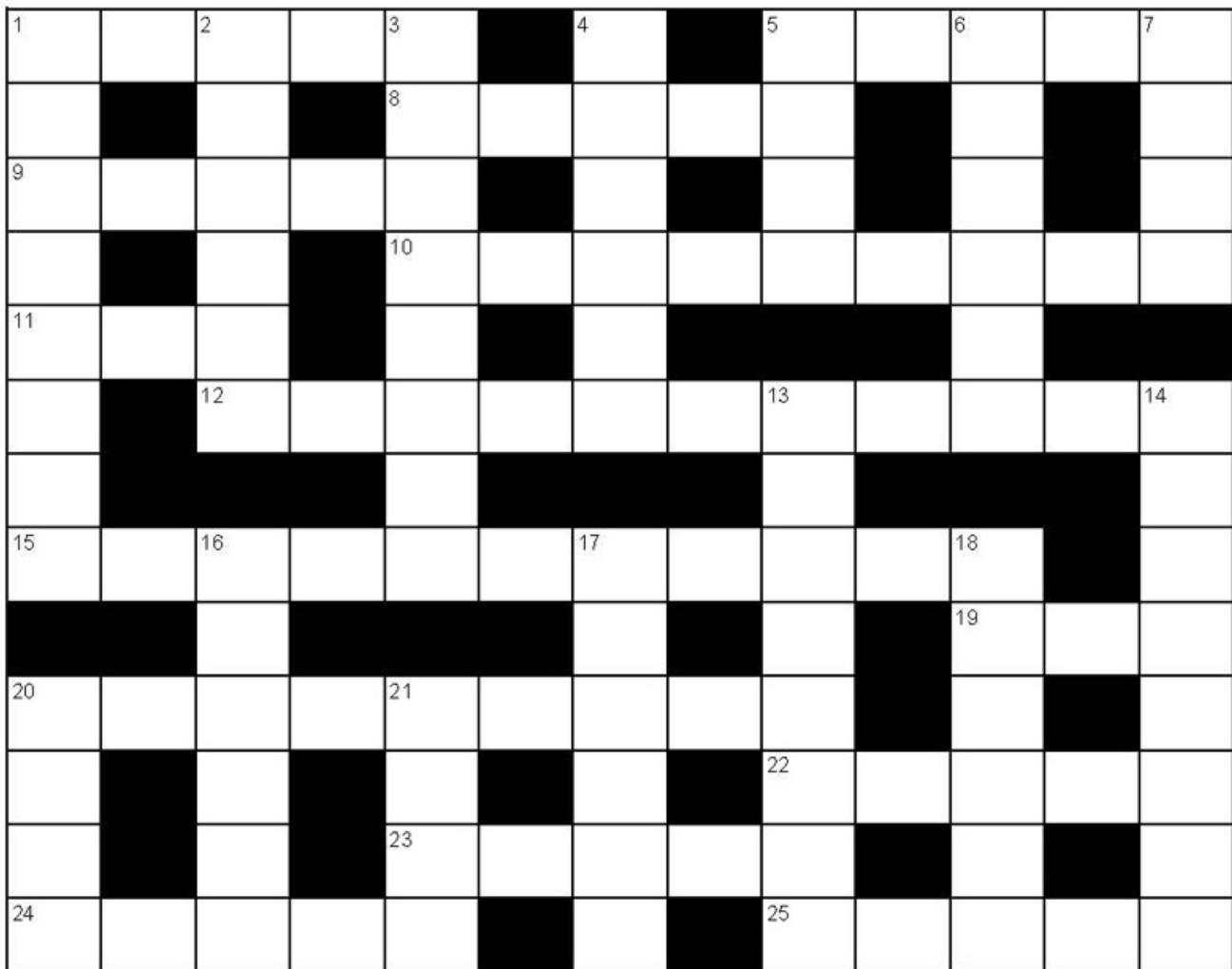
- 1 Chaots can be dreadful boors (5)*
- 5 Backward child creates Chaos monsters (5)*
- 8 Spine or a fragment falls off Chaos fortress (5)*
- 9 Within, taint rages within (5)
- 10 Cash and notes scattered in evil lair (5,4)
- 11 Spasm that indicates Chaos initially (3)
- 12 Chaos monsters ripped apart a thousand dark shirts (11)*
- 15 Flying monsters pin down slime monster (11)*
- 19 Organ is last part of Jack O'Bear (3)
- 20 Oh! Can gorp be formed by the Mutator? (9)*
- 22 First section of a trip meandering (4,1)
- 23 Steal into exercise to investigate (5)
- 24 Droppings spread dust around eastern edge of Balazar (5)
- 25 Can Mostali build a nation finally, one from the Mostali Decamony? (5)*

Down

- 1 First two of broos first were first stood on end (8)
- 2 No cash up front for riding Gorakiki creature (2,4)*
- 3 Cats upside down on another? Nothing abrupt or disconnected (8)
- 4 Wandering steppe barbarians now mostly insane zealots at last (6)
- 5 Herd animals are sung about (4)
- 6 Between Rules Ten and Twelve, probably (4,2)
- 7 Phlegm from Chaos pits (4)
- 13 Violent rape, note, can disembowel (4,4)
- 14 Half of Bagog's children stinging creature (8)*
- 16 This Aldryami soldier knows his class from his elfbow (6)*
- 17 Yelm is ungodly? Not entirely! (3,3)*
- 18 Ogled Lunar under shelter (6)*
- 20 Trapped in wasteland (4)*
- 21 Serpents as footnote (4)

If you want a little extra help, only the clues marked with an asterisk* are the ones where some knowledge of Gloranthan mythology, geography, fauna etc is necessary either to understand the clue or to provide the answer.

Warning: the Surgeon-General of Oraya has determined that solving ChaosWord clues carries a risk of illumination, which can seriously damage your health.



Solution on Page 34

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Donkey and the Death Rune

John Kennon

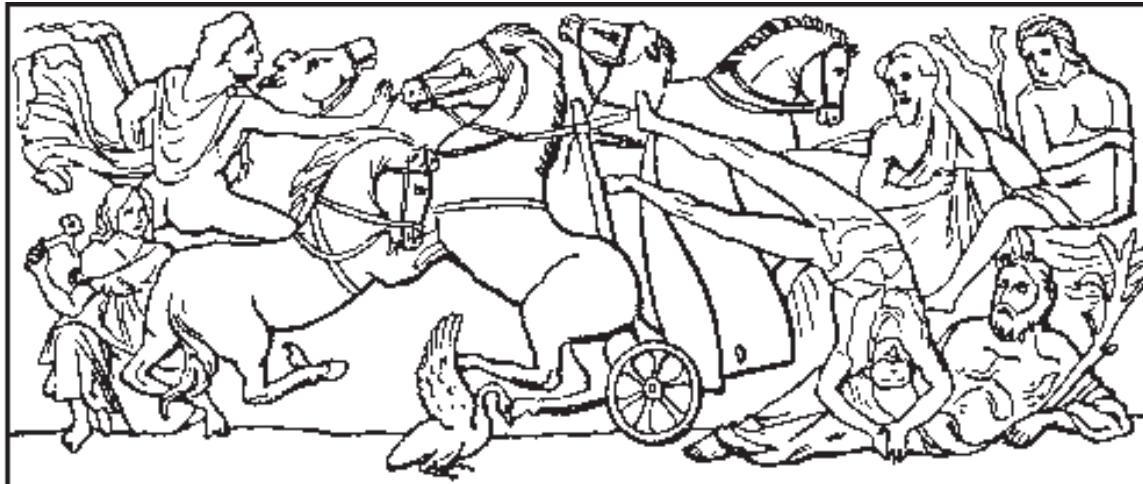
The story the lecherous Lodrili Illig 'the Old Goat' told the children of the Poor Cousins of Alda-Chur :

"You see, back when Death was new, Lodril traveled all across the world to help his people with That Which Now Was. And in his travels he came to a troubled land where men, on dying, rose and simply stood, as if they knew not where to go or what to do. And he waved his hands before these dead men, shook and shouted at them, and tried to get them to follow him to somewhere better, but they were senseless, and could not hear him, and they simply swayed in the lingering grey light.

Now of course Lodril could have shouted loud enough to break the world and got their attention that way, but he wasn't in that sort of mood, and though they were not his people he felt sorry for them, and because they deserved better he set out to find what the problem was.

And so Lodril found a place teeming with these confused dead men, all swaying in a great crowd. And they were looking straight ahead to a stark place with dark pillars, amid which Little Gods in ornate robes were bickering and waving their staves and crying out in sonorous voices, while all around them birds flew and shrieked, wolves howled, dark horses reared and greats toads called to each other like rolling drums, and there were a great number of other beasts besides. And amid all this cacophony the dead stood still and unmoving, as if deaf. Lodril pushed his way carefully through the crowd (so as not to break the Dead) and approached the Little Gods, and eventually got the attention of one who seemed to be taking a rest from their incessant debate.

"Who are you, Little God ?" he called above the din of the beasts, to which the answer came in a high-pitched and nasal voice "We are the Conveyors of the Dead, Keepers of Secrets and Masters of Mysteries which you



could not possibly understand, oh Earth-Bound One !”

“Riiight.” Lodril replied, scratching his rump. “And what are you all arguing about ?”

The Little God lofted his unbalanced jewelled staff high as if it was a great blade, and shrilly called out “We debate the Forms of the Dead, that all must obey on their passing ! That which We decide here will bind all men for ever more ! None can be privy to our Wise Council !”

“I see.” Lodril belched. “And what’s with all the animals ?”

The Little God raised his arms to the dark heavens, teaming with flocks of birds, and cried “Psychopomps !”

Lodril pulled himself up to his full height, his shadow engulfing the Little God, and said darkly “What did you just call me ?”

The Little God paled even further and quickly explained “I mean no insult ! I and my brethren debate over which animal should serve as Guide and Warden for the Dead, to wake the Dead from their reverie and bring them where They must go. Until we have decided upon the most noble, fearsome and doleful of beasts, fit for this dread responsibility, the Dead will remain as they are !” The Little God turned to point at a particularly scrawny steed. “Consider the Pale Horse ! How dread in aspect ! How bleak in bearing ! How ..”

But Lodril had already left. The Little God shrugged and returned to the debate.

Their argument continued with no agreement til the darkest hour of night, when a dreadful noise echoed across the plain, clear even above the shrieks and bleats and croaks and calls of all the animals there gathered.

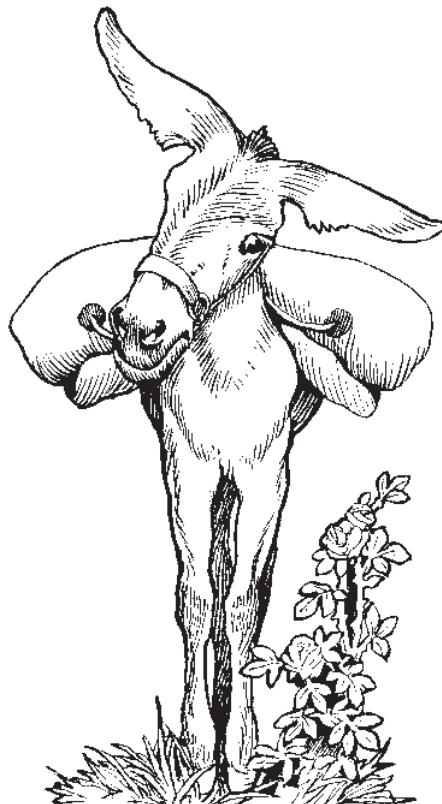
The Little Gods stopped their bickering and glanced about in confusion, and long moments passed til the terrible cry called out a second time, so loudly that all the animals were shocked into silence and stillness.

A long eternity seemed to pass, and then a third time the fearsome bray was heard, so jarring that even the Dead turned to learn its source, and the Little Gods all nodded and stroked their beards and said that this beast must indeed be the one they sought, whatever it might be.

And there amid the throng was Lodril, leading a simple pack animal through the attentive Dead, its cry so full of anguish and sorrow that no man could ignore it.

“Sure, you can borrow mine” he said.

And that’s how Donkey came to carry the Death rune.”



Wooyee of Kralorela

David Millians

Wooyee are the witches and shamans of Kralorela, and they are members of a truly ancient tradition, stretching back into the serpentine coils of time. Their diverse ways certainly predate Emperor Daruda. Some wooyee discover their special abilities on their own, but most are part of extended lineages of magical practitioners and draw on talents developed over many generations. Wooyee lineages and individuals are highly varied, ranging from the many helpful village wise women to the crazed and degenerate magicians of ill-favored wild places. Few wooyee have access to all of the abilities listed below.

Many wooyee have ties with hsunchen folk, while others serve as agents of the imperial government, working with headmen and magistrates, who may be their relatives. In rural villages, wooyee are often the primary source of special magic and healing for their communities.

The wooyee of Kralorela do not have a specific shamanic practice. Any wooyee practi-

tioner that has Spirit Face and relationships to two or more spirits from any tradition or practice of 1W2 or better gains a fetch, usually through dramatic circumstances. Many wooyee never progress to the point of having a fetch.

Many commoners follow small parts of the practices described below. For example, the patriarch of almost every clan in the empire knows some skills of the Ancestor Practice.

Entry requirements: Be Kralori, usually related to teacher.

Abilities: Astrology, Be Unseen, Body Heat, Dismember Self, Dragon Roads, Dream Divination, Feign Death, Fetch, Fly, Herbalism, Know Local Spirits, Kralori Myths, Open Spirit World, Read Omens, Read Scales of the Lizard, Remove Own Head, Resist Blades, Resist Heat, Shamanic Escape, Spirit Face, Spirit World Travel, Tend Illness, Tend Wound

Virtues: Wooyee come in all varieties, but most are Secretive about their traditions.



Relationships: Family, Master or Teacher, Spirit Ally, Spirit Place, Village; to Practice

Traditions & Practices

Wooyee may join as many traditions and practices as they can, for they are all considered unified in the Elder Dragon Way. A wooyee may have as many charms and fetishes as her Spirit Face rating divided by four.

Ancestor Practice

Ancestors are lineages are vital links in the society of Kralorela. Deceased ancestors are still considered part of the family and join in many seasonal and personal events. Practitioners use the ability of Worship Ancestor to bring their departed kindred back in some form to participate and even bless family gatherings for festivals, births, weddings, funerals, and so forth.

At the end of each emperor's reign, the souls of the blessed deceased pass on with him, but ancestor worshippers remain able to contact some vestiges of their ancient lineages. Many departed family members, of course, spend time in the court of Udam Bagur, the Lord of the Underworld, and their jailers may require bribes to allow them the temporary freedom to enjoy a ceremony with their descendants. The recently dead often appear quite tangible, as they join in a family feast, to those with Spirit Sight, but more distant ancestors are vague and noble.

Entry Requirements: The practitioner must learn the ways of this practice from a relative.

Abilities: Ancestor Practice Knowledge, Consecrate Ancestral Shrine, Stories of Ancestors, Summon Ancestor, Worship Ancestors

Virtues: Chaste, Filial, Honorable, Proud.

Spirits:

- Ancestors (Curse Unfilial Descendant 13 to 7W, Family Lore 10 to 10W, Fertility 17, Healthy Family 10 to 20, Respect Elders 15, Protect Child 15, Settle Dispute 8 to 5W)
- Ghost spirits (Banish Ghosts 10 to 10W, Hide from Ghosts 10 to 20, See Ghosts 15, Talk to Ghosts 15 to 5W)

Fetishes: Ancestor fetishes are usually made from many, usually inexpensive, substances and often portray faces, children, or a family sigil.

Secret: Channel Ancestor (Results vary but will often include traits listed above, plus those particular to the ancestor channeled, all in the 1W2 to 10W3 range. Kralori families keep detailed genealogical records, some stretching back hundreds of generations.)

Secret Requirements: Filial, Spirit Face, and relationship to ancestor spirit of 1W2 each.

Other Side: Ancestor worshippers can travel to the underworld (10W3) or to Summerland Heaven and the realms of past Dragon Emperors (10W3 and higher). All such realms are bureaucratic in nature, and spirit travelers must navigate the official requirements to find their kin.

Other Connections: Ancestor worship permeates the basic society of Kralorela and draws on many ancient traditions. Many followers of this practice are people of significance for their clans and in their communities.

Disadvantages: This practice is associated with the common people, and while the more educated and enlightened of society often still honor their ancestors, they know that this practice is worldly.

Four Vices Practice

This practice is diverse and, thankfully, rare. Its practitioners usually desire shortcuts to their goals and use the practice spirits to weaken their enemies.

Entry Requirements: All are welcome, though a potential practitioner will have to find a teacher to initiate him in the practice.

Abilities: Desecrate, Dissemble, Four Vices Practice Knowledge, Tales of the Four Vices, Worship Four Vices

Virtues: All negative personality traits.

Spirits: Some practice spirits have a single trait, while others are combinations. Ratings range from 6 to 6 $\frac{1}{2}$.

- Ignorance spirits (Cowardice, Deceit, Despair, Discord, Disloyalty, Disrespect, Envy, Impatience, Mischief, Procrastination)
- Illusion (Extravagance, Guilt, Impiety, Selfishness, Shame, Sorrow, Unfiliality, Vanity, Wrath)
- Materialism spirits (Excess, Greed, Violence)
- Sensation spirits (Gluttony, Indolence, Lust)

Fetishes: Practice fetishes include blindfolds, fans, and pillows inscribed with cryptic words; lurid books and amulets; broken writing tools; defaced imperial coins; impious icons of the gods; and serrated knives with unwholesome inscriptions.

Secret: Community Vice (The practitioner's spirits can affect multiple targets, depending on success level.)

Secret Requirements: One spirit relationship, Spirit Face, and Worship Four Vices at 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ each.

Other Side: The Empire of Vice mirrors the land and society of Kralorela. Its inhabitants are passionate spirits of vice, dwelling in false beauty and splendor.

Other Connections: Followers of this practice are often part of larger networks of evil cultists and organizations. Many turn to ways of Sekever.

Disadvantages: Kralori society condemns this practice as the most abominable, and its followers are persecuted where discovered.



Hungry Ghost Practice

This secretive practice has existed in Kralorela for eons, but it gained strength and prevalence in the wake of Emperor Yanoor's death, for the hungry dead became much more common. For a time, the False Dragon Ring supported such cultists and drew on their power, but wise Emperor Godunya banned such practices long ago. In spite of this, there are those who continue to draw power from the hungry dead. Practitioners lurk on the edges of society and seek victims to feed the needs and whims of their spirits.

Hungry ghosts most commonly require sacrifices of food and blood, for the hunger for what they had in life and no longer enjoy. Their hungers, though, can vary, and some may demand sacrifices of anything from liquor to knowledge to sex.

Entry Requirements: Must make a blood sacrifice to the hungry ghosts.

Abilities: Cook, Hungry Ghost Lore, Hungry Ghost Practice Knowledge, Knife, Stalk, Worship Hungry Ghosts.

Virtues: Greedy, Hungry, Selfish.

Spirits:

- Hunger spirits (Curse 10 to 5W, Devour 10 to 20, Hungry 10 to 10W)
- Hungry Ghost spirits (Hungry Ghosts can have any ability known to Kralorela. Ratings will range from 5 to 15W.)
- Ghost spirits (Banish Ghosts 10 to 10W, Hide from Ghosts 10 to 20, See Ghosts 15, Talk to Ghosts 15 to 5W)

Fetishes: Practitioners make their grisly fetishes from the remains of their offerings to the ghosts.

Secret: Devour Life (The practitioner can consume the entire soul and flesh of a victim, gaining a lingering bonus equal to the victim's highest ability, duration depending on the degree of success. See below under Disadvantages.)

Secret Requirements: A relationship to a Hungry Ghost, Spirit Face, and one practice Virtue of 1W2 each.

Other Side: This practice has no otherworldly connections, for hungry ghosts are trapped in the Middle World. See below under Disadvantages.

Other Connections: Followers of this practice are often part of larger networks of evil cultists and organizations.

Disadvantages: Firstly, Kralori society condemns this practice, and its followers are persecuted where discovered. More deeply significant, every time a practitioner uses the Practice Secret, he must test his rating in the Secret against his highest non-practice relationship trait. Any failure results in a lingering

penalty, while a complete defeat draws the practitioner's spirit from his body, and he becomes a hungry ghost.

Lord Dragon Practice

This rare practice draws upon the ancient hsunchen practices of Kralorela, though in limited form. Some scholars speculate that the Path of Immanent Mastery derived from these teachings.

Almost every Kralori has hsunchen ancestry, though few would believe, much less acknowledge, this fact. The most common is Deer, but Wolf is also frequent in northern provinces. Much less common are Boar, Bull, Chicken, Crane, Monkey, Orca, and Turtle. Others are extremely rare.

A few followers of this practice move beyond it into the more esoteric and even mystical possibilities of dragons, while others join hsunchen traditions.

Entry Requirements: Must have hsunchen blood, but this is rarely acknowledged or even known by everyday Kralori.

Abilities: Hsunchen Customs, Dragon Myths, Know Local Wilderness, Lord Dragon Practice Knowledge, Speak [Beast Tongue], Worship Dragons.

Virtues: Authoritative, Proud

Spirits:

- Beast spirits (Beast Body 10 to 10W, Beast Head 10 to 10W, Claws 5 to 5W, Fangs 5 to 20, Fly on Spirit Breezes 10 to 20, Strong 15 to 5W, Tough 15 to 5W)
- Dragon spirits (Dragon Claws 5 to 15W, Dragon Eye 5 to 5W, Dragon Jaws 15 to 5W, Dragon Wings 15 to 20, Dragon Wisdom 15)

Fetishes: These practitioners make their fetishes of animal parts, usually their ancestral Beast.

Secret: Manifest Horned Beast (This Secret augments the abilities of the three or more mastered spirit relationships, effectively allowing them to rise above the limitations listed above.)

Secret Requirements: One Beast spirit relationship and two Dragon spirit relationships of 1W2 each.

Other Side: The Primeval Forest, home of the elder beasts, children of the Great Dragon, is full of spirits and wonders. Some Kralori scholars conclude that it is the Garden of Temptation.

Other Connections: Many commoners respect this tradition. Some practitioners have connections with hsunchen tribes, though the true beast people can be suspicious.

Disadvantages: The educated of Kralorela look down on this practice, some even considering it a dangerous dragon path or of questionable loyalty and prosecuting its members.



Kralori Sky

David Millians

Astronomy in the Land of Splendor

The sky reflects the world. Much like the empire and the Underworld, the sky is full of dragons and an elaborate bureaucracy. The events and interactions occurring in the sky reflect and affect those in the inner world.

The Sun is an emanation of the Cosmic Dragon, and the Sky Ring is the guardian of the night. The Red Moon is a sign of war or illness in the outside world, possibly a sign of Sekever's Return.

The stars are celestial beings, illuminated beings, liberated beings, heavenly places, visible poetry, and lessons. One is Tanye, the first word, "Speech," and another is the Dragon's Eye. Shang Mun the Heaven Gate is the Palace of the Sky Ring, and Dee Yoo the Hell Gate plunges into the Underworld. In the south-western skies are the Peace Stars and the War Stars.



Different parts of the sky correspond to earthly realms, mostly Kralori regions. Based on events in the sky, Kralori stargazers and officials can anticipate events within Splendor, either supporting them for the common good or ameliorating disasters.

The Kralori believe that each person is associated with a star in Heaven, to which he should make personal sacrifices. Naturally, only those with time and wealth are able to do this to any extent, though this belief has inspired any number of common phrases of profanity.

Heaven's Staff is composed of a mix of what westerners call planets, stars, and constellations:

- Lord Aptanace, elevated as the Sage of Heaven, is always at the Center.
- Gwang Yan is the Eye of the Emperor in Heaven and the residence of the Archexarch of Heaven.
- Gwan Jiah is Heaven's Steward. During the day he is checking the whole Household of Heaven.
- Poo is the Servant. When he is not visible, he is replenishing the Household of Heaven.
- Chway Shee is the Cook. Heaven has thirty-one days of feast and thirty-one days of fasting.
- Qing is the Lover. She serves one third of the night and reappears, refreshed.

- Hway Beeng is the Great Guard, who has fourteen days of patrol and fourteen days of prayer and magical preparations.
- Hsiang Tow is the psychopomp, always gathering souls to the east.
- Prominent Constellations
- Hsuan the Dark Dragon
- Hwayway the Great Dragon
- Huday the Bowman
- Loo the Willow
- Mung Hwan the Nightmares
- Palace of Evil Sekever of the Four Vices
- Palace of Hway Beeng, which he is never able to visit.
- Shan Foong the Sky Fan
- Susu the Silent Stars of Reverence
- Tsang the Water Bearer
- Way and May are the Little Sisters of Heaven.
- Yanoor's Palace is the residence of the doomed emperor.

The Light Dancers of the Horizons

- Tsow Dan the Morning [Theya]
- Hong Hoon the Evening [Rausa]
- Bing Lung the Freezer [Kalikos]
- Hwa Yan the Burner [Southern Jumper] is invisible to the naked eye, but Kralori astronomers remember it, know that it is still there, and record that its color changes over the eons.

Other Features of the Sky

- The Heaven & Earth Ribbons allow Kralori magicians to ascend easily into the Sky during five nights of the year.
- Heaven's Celebrations occur at unpredictable intervals around Aptanace's Star and always signal good fortune. They are most common in the summer but most spectacular in winter.

- Mo Da the Silent Son is a child of Thrun-hin Da. He controls the tides of the world's oceans and plunges from the sky to return to his mother at irregular intervals.
- Sho the Beast moves haphazardly across the sky, sometimes hiding for many years but disrupting and even destroying the peaceful movements of Heaven.
- Yu the Fools wander about the outer worlds and are sometimes visible in the sky. They bring vice and debauchery.
- Yun Hsing the Luck Star makes an appearance in the sky each summer, close to the horizon, and many gamblers and common folk make wishes or place bets at the time of its appearance.
- Chiang the Rainbow is not truly a creature of the sky but of the atmosphere. The Kralori believe that it unites Om and Fa, the high places and the low places. As such, it can be a path for long journeys by those that know how. It often appears as a dragon or with a dragon head.



WESTERN WIZARDRY

Hervé Carteau

WHAT IS WIZARDRY ?

Wizardry is the Magic practised by the Malkioni monotheist cultures of western Gener-tela. Wizardry spells are the result of applying Reason and Logic to the World, of manipulating Matter and Energy in their Runic Forms. The Runes are the result of devolution of the All and are the highest concept that can be understood and acted upon by mere humans. Wizardry is a mixture of Art and Science. It is an intellectual field which is so large and offers so many possibilities that its students must specialize in studying part of it only.

While there is a huge tradition that Western magic requires written stuff to read, that is not about reading words: wizardry is about changing one's consciousness with the help of visual symbols. Technically, wizardry has little to do with faith and piety.

WHERE DOES WIZARDRY COME FROM ?

All wizardry originates from the work of the First Sorcerer, Zzabur, brother of Malkion. During the Fourth Action, Zzabur began studying the unbending Laws of the Universe and to manipulate matter and energy. He was the first to master the Magic Rune and began training others in his arts, eventually forming one of the six tribes of Danmalastan, the Enrovalini, to better study and develop Sorcery. In time, the six tribes organized the eight original schools of Sorcery, which still exist today. They developed more spells during the

Fifth Action, in the Wars of Low Magics, when Zzabur fought off the elements and the emotions. Later, he federated all Sorcerers in the world to end the Ice Age and other catastrophes, developing High Magics.

At the Dawn, the eight original schools were greatly weakened. The Enrovalini became Brithini, led by Zzabur himself, strictly following the original laws of Malkion and keeping aloof of most humans. But whole parts of their population emigrated from their island of Brithos several times and settled in Akem (Fronela), Seshnela, etc. Most evolved as normal (mortal) human beings but kept venerating One God and using Sorcery. All Malkioni wizards are the heirs of Zzabur's people and are often called Zzaburi.



There was much debate about which rules to follow for many centuries, until the Abiding Book was written by the Hand of God in Jrustela in 646. Most wizardry used today comes from the Abiding Book. The Abiding Book holds Magic which has been proven over a thousand years. It states the Laws of Malkion and tells how Creator became the Law, the Prophet, the Founder and the Person who died. It relates the survival stories of the Chosen of Malkion who upheld his faith and Laws against rivalry and doom. It holds many homilies, parables on the Life of Malkion and details proper rites to invoke Blessing and Curses. It also holds the core spells common to most Malkioni Churches, all cleverly hidden or coded.

The wizardry of the Abiding Book is within the text itself. Each character of the Western script corresponds to core Gloranthan runes. By studying the relationship each character of the Abiding Book has with every other character, a wizard can understand how the runes relate to each other and their permissible combinations. Thus studying of the Abiding Book is key to understanding and interpreting the Runes themselves.

The God Learners, wizards of the Second Age, used the Abiding Book purely as a tool to develop many more new spells. Some, the Zistories, even went so far as to randomly recombine parts of it using machines to reach that goal. Because they did not respect the word of God, God did punish them and Creation wiped them out. The original Abiding Book

was lost when Jrustela sunk and only copies of copies exist today.

All modern churches' Holy Books are made of only incomplete parts, glosses and commentary of the original Abiding Book, some with added Spells (from older brithini Grimoires, Arkati tomes, God Learner inventions). They are all written with the same alphabet and can be read by any literate westerners.

WHO PRACTISES WIZARDRY ?

In western societies, all professional users of Wizardry are members of the Zzaburi caste (or their heirs), distinct from all others. Most are Wizards (or Mages), members of a School, itself belonging to a Church. They abide by the Laws of Malkion as defined by their Church. They only can learn spells validated by it. While piety may help them to cast spells more effectively, it is not a very important requirement. Their role is to "maintain the energetic well-being of their community" as Malkion Himself decreed.

This includes protecting the community against all magical threats, advising rulers (Talari) on such matters and making sure the Dronari (commoners) and Horali (soldiers) behave in ways that maintain and strengthen the community. While some occupy high positions in Church hierarchy, most Mages spend their time meditating on their Holy Book, practising exegesis and trying to understand God and his Creation through their Scriptures.



Schools of wizardry are common within most Churches. They are communities of Zzaburi gathered around noted teachers. These schools are often organized as a religious fellowship and founded by or dedicated to a Saint of the Church. Schools often have carefully ordered daily routines, community goods, and strict taboos on diet and clothing. These scholastic communities pursue an intellectual mission of understanding wizardry and the holy texts of the Church.

There also exist independent Schools of Wizardry, each with its founder, which do not belong to any church (but might have a long time ago). Their members are called Sorcerers. While they may have wider access to many spells, they are viewed with much distrust by established churches. Most also are much less well-funded and organized. They do not care about “the energetic well-being of the community” and focus on the quest of knowledge.

HOW DO WIZARDS AND SORCERS WORK IN GAME TERMS ?

Wizardry students learn their spells from Grimoires, which are written materials, decoded extracts and comments from some parts of the Abiding Book or one of its many copies, versions or exegeses. Each Grimoire is an independent skill learned as such. Wizardry spells have specific, unchangeable effects. Nothing can be “improvised” from a sorcery spell: the Laws of nature make a spell work the same way all the time.

Mages and Sorcerers have a “Comprehend Grimoire X” skill which allows them to cast all spells contained in this specific Grimoire at the same rating. Each +1 costs them 2 HP. They may also learn specific spells individually. Spells do not need physical support to cast, though Zzaburi can boost their skill us-

ing special components or by casting them in ritually prepared locations.

Wizardry spells are powered by energy drawn from the Essence Plane. Part of the ability to cast the spell is the direct channelling of this energy. Church Wizards also channel their congregations’ prayer energy. Sorcerers can Tap energy from the mundane world (including people), to its detriment, which makes them so feared.

Wizardry is a specific kind of Magic which is affected and/or affects other (theist / animist) magics at a penalty. Difficulty level is at least one level higher when attempting to dispel, perceive or understand these foreign magics (difficult becomes very difficult, etc).

Zzaburi all train in mastering Runic Sight (though this name may change from one school to another). This allows them to understand the underlying Runes in any being, place or object they examine. The higher the success the better the information gained. This can be used as an augment to understand a Grimoire or magic text.

HOW DO MALKIONI CHURCHES WORK?

Malkionism is fundamentally urban in mindset. All members of Malkioni society are members of their city, be they the artisans who live and work within the walls of the city or farmers who work the lands of the city and come to the city only for worship and special occasions (indeed both occupations belong to the same caste – the Dronari). Malkioni society is imagined as a Universal City, with each caste contributing to the well-being of the whole.

Malkioni churches are strictly hierarchized affairs and organized from the top down. All members must follow the Laws of Malkion

defined by the Church or risk anathema. Their structure was defined in the Abiding Book a thousand years ago and is the same for all of them. Here is the basic structure of a Malkioni Church:

- Head of a Malkioni Church is the “Ecclesiarch”, also called Living Saint. He is the wisest and most learned among his peers, who elect him in conclave to this position when the former Ecclesiarch dies. He has the power and duty to steer the whole church and is the last instance for all questions of dogma and religious justice. He can use the whole church’s community support to power his own spells in times of need, which makes him extremely powerful.
- The Saint is assisted by companions who are called “Judges” or “Watchers.” Each city has its Watcher who oversees the whole local church organization. He can also use the city’s community support to power his spells. “High Watchers” can be appointed by the Ecclesiarch to oversee Watchers in very big churches. Other Watchers are heads of wizardry schools or direct assistants to the Ecclesiarch. All Watchers and High Watchers are Zzaburi.
- Knowers are Wizards, learned Zzaburi who have mastered the Scriptures. They have access to most, if not all, the Spells found in their Church’s Holy Text (usually an interpretation of the Abiding Book). Wizardry schools train the Zzaburi caste and provide learned guidance and interpretation as to the meaning of the Holy Texts of the Church. Most of these schools are under the supervision of a Watcher.
- The priests of the Malkioni churches are called “Readers”. Senior priests are called “High Readers”. Readers



are not Zzaburi, but Talari, Horali, and Dronari who, in addition to their other duties, lead religious services for their own caste. While they may know a few sorcery spells, their main duty lies in the Reading of their Scriptures. These are select extracts of their Church’s Holy Book, chosen to educate each caste. Each weekly reading gives the attending members a Blessing to their caste activities (the Narrator may give a situational augment to heroes who have recently attended a Reading of the Scriptures). The Reader can also invoke specific blessings at ceremonies for marriages, funerals, births, etc. When appropriate, the Reader can use his community’s support as a bonus to his blessings.

- The clerks of the Church are called “Servants”. Important clerks are called “High Servants.” The servants of the Church assist the Watchers and make up the church’s bureaucracy. A few only are Zzaburi. Servants of a church may also

be soldiers, spies, architects or any other profession that a Watcher deems worthy and useful to reach his goals.

Not every church is centralized like the Rokari church. Many smaller Churches have independent Watchers who may or may not gather in conclaves and do not answer to any Ecclesiarch. In fact, some branches of the bigger churches set in faraway lands are de facto independent (such as the Rokari of Safelstran city-states).

CAN NON-ZZABURI USE SORCERY TOO ?

In most Malkioni churches, Talari may learn Ruling Magic, Horali Fighting Magic and Dronari magic appropriate to their work. These people recite Prayers, a limited type of spell that does not require literacy to obtain. Often the Saint's exploits are illuminated books or tapestries. These prayers are normally associated with a Malkioni Saint who is worshipped but not with sacrifice or personal devotion. Prayers to saints point towards an understanding of the Invisible God and provide wizardry of an unsophisticated sort. For example a prayer to St. Gerlant might function as a spell for Flaming Sword (using the Fire Rune). Most Churches strictly control access to spells by non-Zzaburi members.



In some cases, the list of the magical deeds of the Saint forms the basis of a Grimoire associated with him. In other cases, the founder of a school of wizardry is recognized as a Saint of a Church and his Grimoire is accorded holy status. Both of these schools are often called "Saintly Orders."

Saint worship predates the Abiding Book and is wizardry, drawing its power from the Essence Plane. It is looked at with suspicion as "pseudo-paganism" by those who take a more fundamental approach to the Abiding Book such as the Rokari Church.

There are also some "hedge magicians" who learn spells orally and individually without the support of any Church. They are called by various names (witches, warlocks, etc.) and can be hermits, healers of a community or itinerary spell casters for hire.

In rules terms, non-Zzaburi must learn each prayer individually and augment at a cost of 1 HP per +1, a much higher cost than sorcerers or mages who augment their whole Grimoire by +1 for 2 HP, which is why they are more powerful magic users.

GAMING OPPORTUNITIES

The above is a "bare bones" approach of game rules for western sorcery. It is how a Church should run, but humans are puny, ambitious and fractious creatures who like to get more out of life than God allowed them to.

The richest and better-educated Dronari, such as merchants, can strive for access to sorcerous powers they are forbidden by their Church to even dream about.

Servants can and do actively jockey for "their" Watcher, whom they want to see promoted to higher responsibilities, and may come into conflict with the "stable" of another watcher.

Readers can gain access to more than their regular scriptures and earn sorcerous powers beyond their station. They might want to use them in contradiction to their Church's credo.

Watchers and above are frequently vying for higher rank in their own church's hierarchies, more to use the congregations' prayer energy to further their goals (which might or might not be completely altruistic) than to get power and riches.

Each Church thinks the others misunderstand the True Laws and want to mend the others' ways either by Reason or by the Sword. Some churches hate each other enough for their members to fight on sight. Any inter-church Council (Synod) is an extremely tense and complicated affair.

Independent Sorcery Schools are feared by most churches because they show that it's possible to yield the highest magical power, Sorcery, without having to obey any church. Their members can also be powerful enough to defy church authorities. Some are useful for specific purposes, but most churches make sure their flock fear and distrust sorcerers, and use them as scapegoats in case of need.



Reactions to Pagans (theists) and Heathens (animists) vary for each church. Some see them as mere cattle for Tapping. Others forbid any contact with them, fearing spiritual pollution. Some want to actively bring them into the fold of Malkionism. A few actually integrate deities in their veneration, presenting them as Saints or aspects of Creator (henotheists).

WIZARDRY ELSEWHERE IN GLO-RANTHA

Wizardry is practised in Carmania, the East Isles and Umathela: in all these places westerners settled down and brought wizardry with them, though their churches transformed into something else. The Lunar Empire also holds some strange Lunar magic that resembles wizardry but draws its power from the Moon and not the Essence Plane. The Kralori also know and practise their brand of Sorcery. Mostali do use energy derived from the Essence Plane to power their magics but with radically different techniques from the Malkioni. Finally, some uz practise sorcery taken from Arkat the man-troll.

OTHER CULTURES' REACTIONS TO WIZARDY

To most theists and animists, there is no difference between wizardry and sorcery. They think all westerners are evil tappers who can tap them dry with one glance. This, along with the Godlearners' excesses, has made "malks" very unpopular in every other culture. Only the most open-minded, cultured members of a pagan society would dare talk to a Malkioni without shooting first. In lands where many cultures interact, such as Wenelia, this reaction is less brutal but the old core of mistrust, fear, hate and jealousy remains.

THE INITIATION OF EGIL

Brendon Rehm

It was Sea Season, when flowers begin again to bloom and the first sowing of the year's crops is undertaken, but this year my thoughts were of the "Initiation," the ceremony for those Orlanthi boys coming of age. I had begun my sixteenth year last Dark Season, born on Wildsday of Movement week, yet unlike some I was not impatient for the Initiation that finally came in Sea Season. Who was I, Egil Argart also known as "the Short" or "the Orphan," to look forward to the mysteries and challenges of that ceremony so well known and so secret to us boys of the town. Me, a foot shorter than Amalric the Quiet, and indifferently good with sling and singlestick. Too poor to get a proper apprenticeship to be a weaponsmith like my father, lost amid the Fall of Boldhome nine years past; unlike the Horsemaster's son to whom were promised all that wealth and clan ties could provide in learning a trade. I had never chased down a red deer and brought home its meat to my family hearth. To say I had done my share in harvesting apples was not a boast to crow before the test of manhood. Nor did any of my tinkering and handiwork about my uncle Broarl's farm and tool smithy seem of any account, least of all in comparison to my father's talent for smithing bronze and weapons even at my age. I did not show fear or shirk, but eagerness I could not find.



The time came and the days of ceremony began, but those were the things all us boys had seen, not the part for the adults and those coming of age, not the part that began on Wildsday that adults were careful to mention only in a round-about and vague manner before those still children in the eyes of the clan. It seemed to me I had the confidence of one who knows he has not stepped off the cliff yet, even as his foot rises above the void, but carried on with my part with no trouble as long as the time for hidden things was not at hand. And then the time was upon me, and the fear failed to arrive at the time expected, cast aside by the following directions from Dranlan the Sword-Master and taking my place among the five other boys. Though it did seem, being a foot or more shorter than all, that I was a runt among hogs. Even when the Storm-Priest began his chant in the Storm Tongue, the fear was held aside by the press of those words shouted to the sky. I could only catch the meaning of one word in ten, but their force was all about me and the adults gathered on the gentle slope of the grazing ground of our town.

Before us was a tall pyre of wood and kindling, like last year's it would burn for several days, but this was the first time I had seen it lit, caught in the play of dusk's oranges & reds and the ever creeping darkness that would bring true night. My eyes followed the

patterns of winds and smoke, only to notice how the flames remained unbuffeted, and the darkness seemed to close in around the crowd of adults at the rim of the encircled fire while that fire began to brighten, enough to bask the details around me in a yellowed glow that hid the faces of my companions as well as those of the adults. Though I tried to ponder this, by thoughts were caught away by the words, now in common Sartarite, clearly meant to instruct or at least advise us boys:

Respect hospitality; do not burden your hosts

and abuse or blood their hearth

Eat your bread quietly, be glad

That a Stranger should be so generous.

Do not judge too quickly.

Keep a clear might with strangers

Even the ugliest Dark Troll

Can learnt o be a friend!

Do not waste yourself in many pursuits

One warrior skilled at sword and shield

Can best twenty fighters

Who a poor at many weapons.

Beware ghosts and spirits

The dead and immortals despise us

Let them be, flee from them.

Unless you be holy, magical, or inspired.

Remember your Tribe and your Clan.

There none are strangers or foes.

A wanderer finds no comfort

Until he finds refuge with his own.

Find a deity to aid you

No one is safe without help.

A wise man friendly with power

Fears not even ghosts.

I suppose I should have pondered these words, but my mind was a slave of my eyes,

wondering at the tricky glow of the fire at the center and the winds circling the edge marked by the adults, who though visible seemed a blur of indistinct faces set to rough forms. Was that Dranlan laying out weapons before us? Where was the Storm Priest? Yet the chant of "Fight! Fight!" rose from the encircling crowd and I hurried to grasp a spear amid the other weapons. I noted it was blunted, and remembered that though many years boys appeared the next day bruised or bloodied, none had died in my memory. Before I could take stock of the situation someone was upon me, armed with a shield and a sword not blunt enough to console me. Yet fear was again crowded aside by the need to try to remember everything I had ever seen or heard about wielding a spear, the object in my hands did not feel like the saplings we boys had sometimes cut and cuffed each other with, and even then I had come off the worse.

Behind me I could hear the calls of betting, "twenty clacks on the eager bullock," who was that? The jeer of "the runt can't even grip a spear right!" surely meant me. The sword and shield man could well be the "bullock," but had some stranger entered the ring about the bonfire? The light obscured both the faces of childhood friends and the jests of adults I had known all my days. I had waited to receive the swordsman's rush, and avoided his blows, placing some confidence in my quickness, but the laughs and rude comments showed the audience did not think highly of my attacker's skill and still less of my defense as we circled each other trading blows and parries. The jeers behind me continued.

As I avoided another blow my opponent stumbled and lost his grip, dropping his sword in the dust and half-light. I lunged forward with my spear and struck a strong blow to his temple, and was rewarded with the sight of blood leaking from his hard leather cap

across one eye. Yet for all that I tried to press this seeming advantage, he managed to block my blows — those that hit — with his shield and even keep stepping toward his sword despite my efforts to cut him off from it. He seemed fiercer and angrier for my cut to his brow, but I had no advantage, instead giving my all to defending myself. But I did hear “ten on the short one” come from some faceless person in the crowd.

I changed tactics and waited for the moment when he reached for the sword, sweeping the dirt with my spear and casting dust up to his face. This proved more troublesome in his eyes than blood had, and though he had his sword again a moment later I caught it with my spear and again he lost his grip, due more to luck than my skill I think. Now I attacked all out with a savage and quick blow to his shoulder that brought a cry of pain, carried away by the furor of battle I immediately attacked again and managed to jab the same spot but this time heard a muffled crack of bone breaking or his shoulder dislocating. For a moment I was as surprised and distracted as he on the ground before me, but I remembered at once many tales of battle and thought to threaten him with my spear and call for his surrender lest I make another blow. When his pained “I yield” came back I moved to stand over him, to protect my victory lest another of the combatants best me and take thus two ransoms.

As I looked around, the light of the fire seemed to withdraw somewhat and I saw the familiar faces of two childhood friends victorious over two others who had once seemed so tall and strong in my eyes. Looking down I was shocked to see Amalric, whom I had known all my life and one I might have called friend if I had the courage, being tended to by Vareena; the prettiest girl in the village but simple of mind at best, yet still blessed with

the arts and spells of healing. It occurred to me now, seeing first her kind tending of Amalric, and then her uncritical and gentle look at me, that perhaps the simpleness of her mind made her better suited to healing than one with sharp thoughts of blame and justice. She only saw suffering and those needing care, never the violence or passion that may have brought that suffering.

For the first time I had a moment of calm to choose my actions with thought and I tried to look proud of my victory but still not belittle my childhoods companion. I laid Amalric’s blade and shield next to him, praising his skill over my luck, but as always Amalric gave hardly a word, and then ones that failed to reveal his mind. But things were happening again now. The bonfire so warm before seemed to shrink in upon itself and become a disk of light but without heat, as the Storm Priest bade that we take the path westward until dawn when we could return...if we survived. The six of us, healed of our wounds and bruises turned away from the disk of light and faced west where a familiar path ought to be.

Before us was a path amid woods — not the open road amid orchards we knew so well, but one shrouded in the growing darkness with overhung branches clasping above to make a pallid arched tunnel into deep shadows. The air seemed too still and sounds seemed to lack any wind to carry them. Obedient to the command of our Priest we advanced, though I felt no shame at letting the taller ones take the lead. I had proved I could hold my own and more in our fight, let one of the losers face the next challenge and prove himself.

So we set foot on a dark path and left our village behind, the sounds of the adults beginning the night’s revels (perhaps remembering their own initiation into adulthood) strangely

muted in the shadowed thickets that grew from the earth and bent back again sealing all but our entrance and the way ahead. Where were we going and how far could we go before dawn? No one ventured to talk despite that we must all have troubled our thoughts over the same things.

The wood was strange this night, more like a forest of stone than the orchards and dales so familiar west of Apple lane. Worse, sounds seemed muted, as if hearing was less useful here - as futile as squinting to peer into Dark Season's blackest night. I gripped my blunted spear tightly and let the others lead, casting the occasional look aside or behind but finding nothing but that muted silence. The adults had always said the Initiation was one of the

clan's most powerful magics, renewing the people by testing a new generation, but what youth believes that? Yet, now, every tale of the Godtime, of Heroes facing awful spirits in strange lands seemed more real than any of my short life.

Time passed, and the dark tunnel of tree limbs and dirt path continued to muffle our steps and provoke fitful glances and startled looks as we thought to see something only to find nothing but stillness. Until we came to the river where no river should be, wider than the Creek at flood and icy cold un-natural to Sea Season. We stood the six of us, taking its measure of swirling currents and finding our swimming surely lacking the skill to challenge it. The others seemed to be stalemated, and somehow I found myself suggesting a plan to ford it. To tie what spears we had together in a square that we could all hang onto and swim as one but with the strength of all six. But I had to admit those who said the churning current would rip apart any weak knots and still over-master our strength were right. Still we came to devise as plan standing there in a ring alongside the torrent. With an understandable reluctance, Amalric used his fine warrior's ax to fell a tree that seemed sure to bridge the gap. As the smallest and most agile I made my way across our rude bridge, I am not ashamed to say on my belly with my sling cord used to make sure no errant swell or hidden trick threw me into that fierce water. If the companions of my youth snickered at me, the muted churning of the river hid it. When I took up my spear and watched ahead as they crossed, they seemed to take me as an equal in a way they never had as a group before.

This time, as we pressed on westward, I took the lead. Things seemed strange but neither had we faced anything insurmountable; I began to feel confident again. Perhaps with the



irony so loved by the gods, the path immediately began to rise, though the dark wood still hid anything more than a stone's throw from our route. Our progress moved from leaning into the uphill steps, to careful plodding aided by spear or hand for steadiness, until we began to climb a rough cliff face, though I could not exactly remember ceasing to walk. Still, despite the thought of "insurmountable," climbing was one of the things I am good at and I showed it to the others by not merely leading the way but actually outpacing my stronger and taller companions, though eventually I did lose hold of my spear (thankfully my lunge to keep it served to knock it away from my companions below and failed to break my hold on the rock face). I should have noticed the wind of such a height, the sounds of my efforts and the other, but in the focus on climbing I seemed to be sealed off like a chick in its egg with only my desire to get out to touch my senses. Thus it was I that finally reached the strangely barren peak, a bald crown unmasked by woods or anything else. My eyes were drawn forward to a stead west of me, slightly lower than the ground I stood on, a rough-hewn palisade surrounding a long house with a few sheds and work buildings along the inside. A gate was prominent on the eastern side that faced me, and the path down from the crown did not vary or offer any other destination. With barely a glance for the others I strode down toward the gate, for surely this was where we were meant to arrive, the distance beyond holding a grey mist that seemed too final to allow another destination.

Only free of the woody tunnel did I notice I was again in twilight, though it still held the flavor of dusk even as it should be the dawn. Walking down the slope I could see the stead better, finding it rudely kept with clear signs of damage unrepaired. The long house and

outbuildings too gave the look of a community not lax, but strained beyond its means. Indeed, for such a size I ought to see either a few workers and watchmen about, or a steadier column of smoke than was visible at the misshapen hearth's vent. Nearing the gate itself I could see the damage to the wall was from frequent and violent battle, in places the sharpened logs seemed chewed rather than cut, elsewhere it seemed burned or even melted. The gate before me was hardly worthy of name so battered it was, yet it still managed to stand and it was no surprise it stood wide open. Standing just outside the lintel I could see similar if lesser damage inside, though I also saw scattered tools and equipment that signified neglect more than combat. By now the watchmen should have appeared or at least called a warning to their companions from hiding outside the reach of an intruder.

I took a look up and beyond the steading, and realized that what I had taken for a mist was something worse, something out of stories told by winter hearths or half-remembered from nightmares. How does one describe the end of the world? There was a vast emptiness beyond, lacking even emptiness since I could not imagine anything that would fill it. All one's life was utters words like "void" freely thinking all know what it means, but this was the void that made the word and only those who saw it with me can really understand me. Who would live here at the edge of the world? My clansmen were approaching so I called to the stead, and thus warned my companions that things were uncertain.

It was with relief I saw a man emerge from the long-house. He was tall and strong of arm and leg but, like his home, carelessly dressed and showing signs of both neglect and rough handling. For some reason it was the two daggers on his belt that caught my



eyes. They seemed to say that here was a man who expected to cast and lose his spear, shatter his ax upon his foes, and still he would draw his daggers in each hand and fight close until an end came. His armor spoke a story equal to the history of the well used palisade. His face was clean and free of wounds or obvious scars, but it still seemed weathered and battered, and he called "Halt, Stranger! Who comes this way, to a place which is not allowed to everyone? Do you come in friendship or as a foe?"

"I am Egil Argart, a redsmith's son, and I travel west until the dawn, but I come in friendship to your stead" I replied in a voice that seemed almost un-natural after the muted wood and the focus of the climb to the hill's crown.

"Greetings, I am Hengal Vingkotsson, the lord of this place. You are welcome here Egil. I offer you hospitality here, in my house, and promise my protection to you and yours while

inside. I offer you water to quench your thirst." His voice rang with a rhythm and rich tone and somehow he had brought a ladle of water to hand before me.

"I thank you for the water as we have traveled far looking for the dawn," and taking a taste before passing the ladle to the others I said, "I am no great warrior but whatever aid I can give you will serve to protect you and yours while I am at your hearth." This was the greeting of hospitality I had heard so many times before in the village. When strangers came to rest on the way Runegate or Jonstown, when the stories of heroes were told, when the Storm Priest made rituals of welcome. Yet now I was speaking and the weight of the bond felt firm and tight upon me. A support to an honest man, a chain to a false one. Had I responded correctly? These words were important yet I was speaking as if playing by the barn with Amalric.

"You are welcome guest, And I offer you more: a blanket to sleep under while you are my guest. This is a thing I only offer friends" Hengal continued with the ease of practice yet deadly serious.

"I accept your offer and will speak ever of your generosity." Surely that was the correct wording, and in my heart I vowed to be truer than I had ever been before to such words.

"Then you are welcome guest. And I offer you more: meat to feed your hunger, a thing we only offer to kinsmen and those as good as them."

"I am honored by your gift and will aid in any hunt or tend your cookpot while I rest here."

"The you are welcome guest. And I offer more: salt as a token of your honor. This is a thing I only give to those who are great, or show promise of it."

"I thank you and will ever afterward speak of your honor and generosity."

Then you are welcome guest. And I offer one thing more: duty, which is only offered to those who would come sit close to me, in my family."

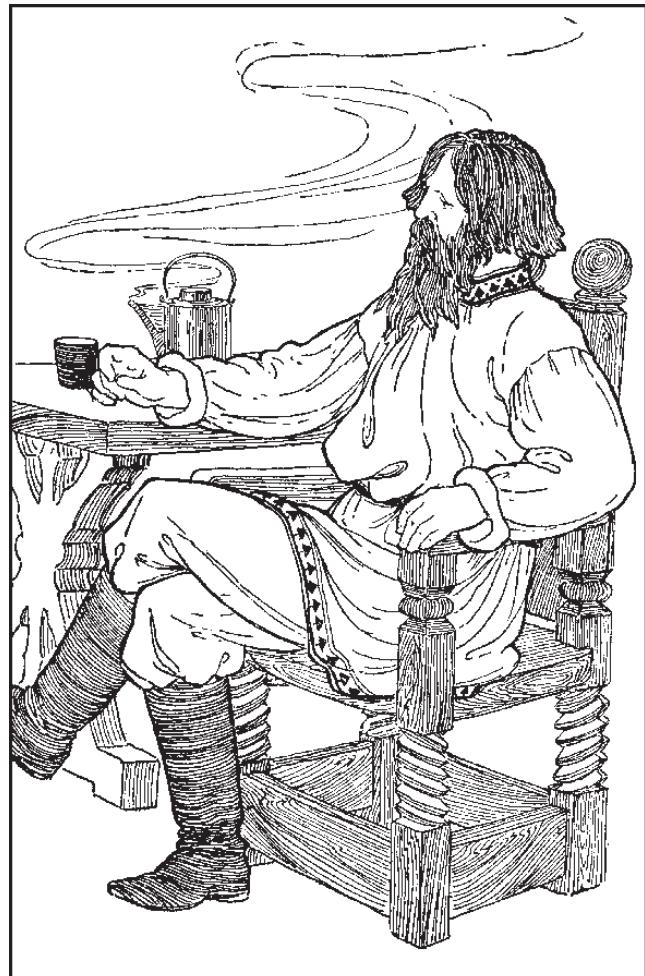
"I accept this duty and will seek to return it as your honor and generosity richly deserve."

So it was that I am my companions became guests at the stead of Hengal Vingkotsson at the edge of the world.

True to his word, Hengal sat me sit at his side by his hearth as we took a coarse meal and drank plain beer. I asked why his stead was in this condition, where were his clansmen to man the walls, his clanwomen to cook and mend and watch the hearth fire? He replied that the constant battle from those beyond the edge had eaten away at his steading's numbers, wearing his people down by work or wounds until he was the last left. But he would neither flee nor fall before any assault as long as breath held within him and his arms obeyed him. I told him my family was one of crafters not warriors, but that I would serve him as I had promised and set about doing what I could to fix the neglect of his camp. Here I used some twine to repair a broom, there I used a bit of wire to fix his cauldron's handle, next I stacked wood neatly and close by the hearth, and as I set about these tasks the night proved I had seen dusk twice in one day. As I judged dawn approaching I made sure to finish up my preparing a simple fare of nuts and a pot of broth at the fire that Hengal might not need for food and drink as he prepared for battle. And he warned us that a raid was sure to come no later than the dawn, but he would stand at the gate while we could take the places that looked good to us to defend ourselves. My companions, bettered armed and armored

than I, rose from their rest, and took places on the wall. I considered my crude singletick and my sling, and chose as many good stones as I could manage. I climbed to the roof of the stead where I could see about me and try to aid whomever was in need if only my sling shots would be true.

That rose-light that marks dawn in coming but not yet here, revealed a shambling hopping mass approaching the gate that Hengal stood firmly athwart, ready with all his weapons. My companions muttered and some even cried out along the walls, but it was that advancing band in a chaotic jumble before Hengal that drew my eye. How to describe that legion of disorder? That misruled mob? Which had horns and which teeth? What thing slavered over bloated lips or tentacle



and tongue? I cannot recount them like some Sage of Lhankor Mhy, nor boast of their panoply soon to be savaged like some Storm Bull bravo. I remember only the one I faced — alone with but a sling and stone in my hands and a singlestick that never left its place in my belt. I tried from the first to aid Hengal, but my stone flew wide; thankfully I had at least not hit a friend, but in that mass it was but a drop in a churning lake even if I had hit my target. And my target saw my attempt, with beady eyes in a badgery face, surmounted by fantastic quills upon its back, and born hopping forward with uncanny speed by graceless frog's webbed feet. It leapt a great hop and was upon the roof, my second stone though ready flew wide and I knew I must gain time and space to draw my singlestick. I turned and leaping myself, caught the edge of the roof with the best of my agility, only to tumble artlessly when I made to fall to the ground. Landing on my shoulder I was in agony as I saw the Spiny-Badger-Frog land in front of me and make to leap atop me. Its mouth gaped wider than any badger's mouth should, revealing a mass of spiny teeth that seemed to clamp and bite with a mad beat faster than that of my heart. It leapt and I struggled in vain to see it take a deep bite from my left leg, tearing with its teeth to swallow the goblet of my flesh in a single gulping moment before it shifted again atop me and seemed ready to swallow me whole even at the agony tore away my sight and thoughts from this nightmare.

I sensed the warmth of the Yelm as true dawn rose, and felt better than I had any right to expect. Half-rising I saw my trousers neatly repaired and rolled up the baggy leg to seem a neatly jagged scar as if the same hand had sewn my missing flesh back onto me. Nor was this the last wonder, for next to me was a replacement of the spear I had lost, yet a

finer and more generous gift it was than the rough and blunt thing my clansmen had made available to such as me, who had no weapon of his own at the fight that had begun the Initiation. And I was different too, not just in my scar or a new outlook after serious events, but in the tethers of power at the disposal of my will, I now knew the way of calling the winds to speed my slingstones onto my target and of calling those same gusts to block and cushion blows against me. Hengal was truly generous, and again I told myself I would not stint in fulfilling the words I had given him.

My companions seemed to have had similar experiences and some, like me, had tangible gifts as well as intangible ones, though I noted Amalric still had the same ax his family had so generously given him the day before. We quickly saw we were in a field girt by trees well known to us all and not far from the western edge of town, but we had managed no more than a few steps toward our village when we saw Dranlan walking along the path and startle at the sight of us. He rushed forward with a rare eagerness and hailed our fortunate return. When he said that after two weeks the clan had given us up for lost, I was not the least in amazement, for to a man we had thought a single night had passed, though a strangely long one.

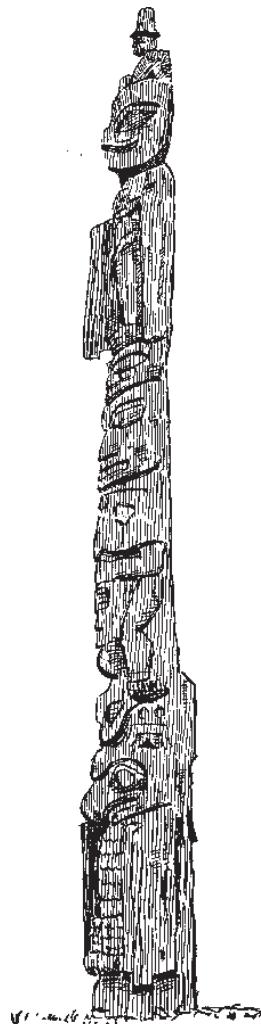
Dranlan hustled us into Apple Lane proper and soon he and the Sheruff were plying us with questions in the tavern and making up for many missed breakfasts with food and finer drinks than I think any of us had been allowed before. It seemed that while others had been gone for a night, we had been gone for two long weeks, a thing not heard of in living memory and told rarely even in tales. The Storm Priest had been pleased we had not been found dead at the dawn like some past, but had worried at the loss of the year's young men even if we had been taken

into the god realm whole by the generosity of Orlanth. But now that we had finally returned, even this cloud was blown away and his mood and the whole village's was jubilant amid the promise we offered for the coming year and future years beyond. Surely they told us this was a good thing for the village and our clan.

Indeed, I felt that our village seemed someone blessed, as tools seemed sharper, pantries tighter and cooler, and even our cook pots that bit more flavor-full. All of us felt strange to be home, even as the days grew into weeks, and I took lessons in spear-work from Dranlan as thanks for my part in bringing good fortune to the clan. I felt proud, like the others, to be accorded an adult and one of the fyrd ready to follow the clan's call to battle, but that pride was supported by the generosity of the gifts Hengal had given me. So I made sure to take a goodly post of sturdy long-lasting wood and have the Storm Priest make sure I carved the runes rightly, so that when I planted it firmly in that field where we had awaked, all who passed by that had wit to read would surely know:

“By Hengal Vingkotsson’s generosity,
I, Egil Argart, lived to see the dawn,
That this place never forget

The gifts given to one who honored Hengal,
Who stands alone at the edge of the world,
Yet never without aid when in true need.”



Entropic Guard

Roderick Robertson

Aggghhhh!

The Entropic Guard are an organization of Chaos Fighters. In my campaign they are not really the group for Player heroes to join, however, as their death rate is astronomical. They are the guys in black armor who look professional, carry the latest and greatest anti-chaos gizmos, make disparaging remarks about “babysitting amateurs”, enter the building first, and serve to show how the monster works. In Star Trek, they are the red-shirts; in Aliens, Colonial Marines; in any made for SyFy Channel original movie, they are the “elite” soldiers.

They are intended to be used to bulk up a party of chaos fighters, but serve merely as ablative armor in the early part of the game. If more than one survives the chaos hunt, you’re not playing them right.

However, if you want to play them “straight” they can be useful allies, or a campaign can even be run with the Player Heroes as part of the organization.

Common Names: Chaos-Fodder; Autonomous Mobile Biological Entropy Detectors, Single use

Form: Paramilitary chaos hunters

Typical Homeland: Lunar Empire or Provinces

Cultural Context: Provides security and decontamination for Eyzaal Denomination Research Centers.

Ideology: Who ya gonna call?

Look and Feel:

The Gloranthan equivalent of a SWAT or Tactical Response team. Members wear a close-fitting red tunic and black trousers tucked into boots under their armor. Armor and weapons are blackened and don’t reflect light.

Purpose: To protect Eyzaal installations from the outside world, and to protect the outside world from Eyzaal “experiments”.

Headquarters: Lory Island Research Center

Reactions: Generally, by the time the Entropic Guard shows up, there are few people around to react to them.



Resources

Leader: Ankrel Fist of Eyzaal has been exposed to so much entropic energy that he has several so-called “Chaos Features”, though he is not chaotic. His body “phases” between being there and not being there — much like a “jumpy” film. The phasing is random, but his body is never there (or not there) for more than a second at a time. His left leg was transformed into that of a zebra (he has learned to compensate); his eyes glow red and can see into the infrared spectrum; and he can “see” about a second into the future, giving him an advantage in combat. Ankrel is an Ordinate of the Irin School.

Renowned Members:

BelVasor the Hand has survived six Decontamination procedures, a record among the Guard. He carries a maul enchanted with Entropic energy, and wears the typical Entropic Guard outfit with the sleeves of his tunic and the arm ptureges stripped off. He has a habit of chomping imported Duckweed cigars when in combat. BelVasor is a member of the cult of Bisos the Chaos Fighter

Membership: The entire guard numbers no more than 200 at any time, often much fewer after a particularly nasty Decontamination procedure. Troopers are organized into teams and assigned to specific Research Installations under the command of Septons and Centurions. Officers are promoted from the ranks after showing coolness under pressure and common sense (surviving a Decontami-



nation procedure is taken as evidence of suitability for promotion).

Other Contacts: The Guard have good relations with the Irin School and other civilized Anti-chaos forces (civilized as in “won’t charge in screaming like barbarian berserkers as soon as chaos is sighted”). They can call on the military to quarantine areas while the Guard decontaminate an area.

Organization: The Guard is organized along the lines of a military unit. Troopers and Septons (sergeants) form the bulk of the organization, with officers promoted from the ranks to lead them. Each team assigned to a station has at least two Septoi (squads of six troopers and a Septon) commanded by a Centurion.

Membership Keyword

Entry Requirements: Security-minded individuals who are willing to work in high-risk environments

Skills taught: Crossbow, Entropic Detector, Net, Security procedures, Spear, Throw

Typical Personality Traits: Cool-head or Gung Ho, Phlegmatic or High-strung

Magic: The teams have access to enchanted weaponry and equipment provided by the Eyzaal denomination. Personal combat and

anti-chaos magic is encouraged. Irin School or similar Anti-chaos affiliation is useful.

Guardian

The DisHarmonic Resonator

Method: Emanation

Form: A complex magico-mechanical artifact with glowing lights, spinning antennae and chimes.

Communication: Leadership Contact. When the Resonator speaks it is unemotional, with beeps and humming in the background. Much like a 1960's movie computer.

Guardian Requirements: The Resonator requires nothing of its followers. Except fresh Strawberries.

Functions: The Resonator greatly aids in the enchantment of Guard weapons and equipment. It imbues items with Extropic energy. This is its only function. The fewer items imbued at one time, the more powerful they are. This energy creates an anti-entropy effect much like that of Truestone.

Notes

Basic Equipment

The Entropic Guard has a variety of items to aid them. Their weapons and armor are imbued with Extropic energy, yielding an Good benefit against Entropic beings and magic.

Guard crossbows are enchanted to be semi-automatic and self-loading. Bolts are loaded into 10-bolt magazines, and the crossbow self-cocks and loads the bolts through magical means. There is about a 1-second delay between shots. The trigger may be kept depressed, in which case the crossbow will fire automatically.

Guard boarspears are enchanted with strengthening magic – they are nearly indestructible, and can (if properly placed) hold a charging Rhino. Nets are also strengthened magically.

Standard-issue armor consists of magically strengthened and extropically-enhanced black leather helms and breastplates with ptureges at waist and shoulder. Black gloves are provided, but have no enhancements. Guard helmets are ensorcelled to ignore the effects of Dust and Screamer bombs. Centurion armor is extropically enhanced to be Superior against Entropic attacks.

Teams have access to Eyzaal-created alchemical bombs. These bombs come in several varieties. The standard bomb (called a "boomer") results in a simple explosion affecting everything within 10 feet (3 meters). It is strong enough to destroy a doorway or make a breach in a wooden wall. A boomer explodes like thunder and a bright flash of red light. "Dust" bombs create a dense dust cloud, obstructing sight, smell, and most detection magics. Dust clouds disperse after about 3 minutes in calm air (such as inside a room), less if there is wind. "Screamers" emit piercing shrieks for about a minute, deafening listeners. "Holders" create a Extropic field about 10 feet across, for about 2 minutes.



Entities caught in this field cannot move (powerful entropic entities may resist the effects of Holder bombs).

Entropy Detector

The Entropy Detector consists of a sealed box with three crystals arranged in a triangle on top and a silver-tipped wand. Use of the detector consists of holding the wand well away from oneself and looking at the bottom-left crystal. Even without any training, a user can tell the difference between “probably safe” and “run now” with ease, due to the strobing crystal and the increasingly painful high-pitched whine. A skilled user can differentiate between degrees of danger.

The top crystal should glow with a light-blue light, indicating that the entropy detector is working. If the crystal ever turns black, the detector has expended all its power. It should be good for at least a year of continual use, and can only be recharged by the Disharmonic Resonator.

The bottom-left crystal pulses orange and produces an ear-grating whine when the entropic energy in an area rises above 10 Ags (Short for “Aggataraltara Units”). The “Entropic Detector” ability allows the user to “read” the pulses to get an idea of just how bad the environment is.



If the bottom crystal is pressed, it will sink into the box until it clicks. At that point the heroes have 10 seconds to get as far away as possible from the box before it releases all the stored extropic energy, bathing a spherical area 30 feet (9 meters) in diameter in 1,000 Legs (short for Legataraltara, or the theoretical “Good Law” opposite of Aggataraltara) of Extropic Energy, preserving everything in a stasis that cannot be broken by conventional means, and is extremely difficult to release using the most powerful Eyzaal magics.

Aggataraltara Units

Entropic Energy is measured in Aggataraltara Units (“Ags”, for short). 5 Ags is considered “background Entropy”. A person can survive for days with no permanent Entropic Reactions in a 10-Ag field, for hours in a 100-Ag field, and will be instantly and permanently Entropically Altered in a 1,000-Ag field. Of course, Entropy being what it is, there is always a small chance that a spontaneous Entropic Reaction can occur even at 10 Ags or less.

Entropy and Extropy

Entropy is called “chaos” by those outside the Eyzaal denomination (and a few others). It is the Formless, the Ever-changing, the Ultimate Beginning and Ultimate End. Extropy is the opposite. It is the Unchanging, the Adamantine, the Still. Outsiders call it “Stasis”, or sometimes “Law”.

Jotorang

Also Known As...

Issue 3 had a myth about Jotorang, a First Age Hero, who went on to become someone rather well known, especially among the Heortlings.

In April, Rule One ran a contest in which Greg Stafford offered a copy of History of the Heortling People to the first person to correctly identify the name by which Jotorang was later (and better) known.

The answer was Lokomayadon.

Xavier Llobet was the first to correctly name Jotorang, and won a signed copy of "History of the Heortling People". Congratulations Xavier!

Several other readers submitted "Lokomayadon". Other names put forward were "Jarankol the Slayer" and "Osentalka and later Nysalor"

Thoughts on running a Web Contest

Greg Stafford surprised me one day after I published Issue 3, and suggested a Contest - Guess the Name of Jotorang, and Win a Prize.

"Hey, cool" says I. So Greg and I chatted back and forth, determining what to do. We agreed on a copy of "History of the Heortling People" as the prize. Then I messed up by the numbers. here are some thoughts on where I went wrong...

Don't have a "First Right Answer Wins" type of contest. that may work for local Radio stations, but not so much in an international community, where people may be asleep, at work, or sitting in front of the computer when you post the question.

Let the contest run for a few days before announcing the winner (and answer, if it's a "Guess the Answer" type question.

Put all correct answers in a hat and draw winners randomly.

Don't write the contest announcement when the cats have been keeping you awake the night before. This prevents you from putting the wrong date on the day of the contest.

Write to Contest rules and announcements in plenty of time before you need to post them.

Post teasers weeks, and then days, before the contest. Describe the prize of the contest, when the rules will be available, etc.. Prep the ground!

That said, I'm more than willing to run more contests on Rule One, if anyone has the urge to sponsor one.

Cha~~s~~Word

Solution

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